

# King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 152

## Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Two

Sephie

Misha disappeared for a bit, keeping Andrei busy for me as well, so that I could have a little time with Ivan. I was hoping he would want to talk about what he sees when he's stuck in his memories. I was still trying to figure out the right thing to say to him to break him out of the loop, so he could sleep peacefully.

Ivan walked in from the back patio. I was the only one on the couches, so he stretched out next to me. "You still look tired," he said. He looked apologetic.

"You do too, Squishy. You're also the one that needs the sleep more than I do at this moment, too."

He thought for a moment, staring at the ceiling. He sighed. "I'll be okay. I can usually get a handle on it after a couple of days."

"Do you want to tell me what you see when it happens? I'm still trying to figure out the right thing to say to you that will break you out of it completely, like Adrik did for me. I can keep you quiet for a while, but I can't seem to break you out of it completely.

You're not helping my self-esteem issues, for the record." I gave him a half-smile, so he would know I was mostly joking. It really was bothering me that I couldn't seem to break him out of the prison of his mind completely.

He was quiet for a few minutes. He looked at me. "Where's Misha and Andrei?"

"They went outside to talk to the guards."

He nodded. "Before you, I would see the doctor that used to torture me. It's always him that I'm fighting. It doesn't matter who's actually in front of me, I can only see that as some doctor and hear his voice in my head. That's why it takes all of them to hold me down. I'm determined to kill him each time. But he always comes back, no matter what I do. He always comes back."

I gave him a knowing look. My uncle had been living in my head for years now.

"But when you talk to me, he disappears. I can hear your voice every time and everything fades to black. I can't see anything, but I can clearly hear your voice. If your voice disappears, the doctor comes back."

I shivered. I remembered the void I was in. "Can you see your own body, but nothing else? Like you're swimming in the blackness?"

He nodded, somewhat surprised. "It happened to you too?"

"Adrik's voice pulled me there, out of the loop from the ball. Or that night...with my uncle. I could hear my uncle's voice there for a while, until I finally let myself remember everything from that night." I looked at him, apprehensively.

"He told me what you did that night, Sephie." He smiled. "I told him that I had thought your beast mode was activated when you shot that guy in the face, but it turns out your beast mode has always been activated." He winked at me.

I gave him a small smile. "I still don't feel any remorse over it. I think I might be a monster for it, but I feel nothing when I think about what I did."

not a monster, princess. You saved yourself. You proved to yourself that you can get yourself out of any

Not everyone would've made it out of that house alive that night." He sat up and

to come out of me breaking out of the facility was in. I proved to myself

I looked at him, laughing. "Seriously. Death is obsessed with us. Like, give it a rest, bro. I'm embarrassed for you."

He laughed. He pulled me toward him and hugged me. "You have no idea what your laugh does for me, princess."

I raised my eyebrow. "Please tell me it's not like fingernails on a chalk board for you."

He laughed again. "No, the opposite, really. I think part of the reason that it takes me days to get over a trip to the doctor is that I inevitably end up in the darkness. I like it there, Sephie. It's quiet. It's calm. I find myself wanting to stay there." He paused, inhaling deeply. "I'm tired of fighting sometimes. I know if I decide to stay, there's no coming back. Your laugh gives me a reason to come back. You radiate joy when you laugh and smile. It's a reminder that I can keep going."

I didn't even try to hold back the tears that were streaming down my face at his words. I curled up next to him, pulling his good arm around my shoulders, my head on his shoulder. "Ivan, I understand. I understand the tired. I understand not wanting to come back. But I need you. If you ever can't find a reason to come back for yourself, then know that I need you here. I will always need you here."

Fle didn't say anything, but I felt him lean down and kiss the top of my head as he held me a little tighter. We sat in silence for a few minutes. I remembered Misha's plan to help him get some sleep without needing me to babysit him. "What about last night when you were listening to me playing at the gallery? What happened then?"

"It was basically the same as hearing your voice. As long as I could hear you playing, I stayed in the darkness. It was nice, actually. But when the music stopped, the doctor came back, same as when I lose your voice."

'I

"So, you think if we made a longer recording or like a playlist of me playing, you could sleep for longer?"

"I don't see why not. It worked last night until the phone died."

"Yeah, that was my bad. I don't know why I didn't think about plugging the stupid phone in." I said.

He chuckled. "You're sleep-deprived because you've been trying to take care of me, princess. It was still a good idea."

"I will happily take care of you, if it means you heal faster. Your one-armed hugs suck," I said, poking him in the ribs. "Do you know what happened to the facility? Like, is it still there?"

"I don't know. I tried to investigate it a few years ago, but I kept running into dead ends. I think it was a top-secret level operation, so there's not much information on it available. There were a lot of boys there still when I broke out. I sometimes wonder what happened to them. There was one nurse that I would talk to. I sometimes wonder what happened to her too."

"Can you remember her name?"

"I don't need to. I stole her key card to get out. I still have it," he said:

"Have you tried looking her up?"

He shook his head no. "I thought about it, but I was too scared. She was the only one that was ever nice to me. I don't know if I could handle knowing that something happened to her because I took advantage of her niceness and stole her card to get out."

"That's fair. But don't forget that she was choosing to work there. Day after day, knowing what was happening there. She's your Max. You're ignoring her red flags because she was all you had at the time."

He was quiet for a moment, then pulled me closer to him. He kissed the top of my head again. "Sometimes I hate it when you use my advice on me. I hate it even more that you're right."

I laughed. "It's good advice. I can't keep it all to myself."